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Central Intelligence Agency  
Office of the Deputy Director for Intelligence

19 March 1986

The Honorable Lee H. Hamilton  
Chairman  
Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence  
House of Representatives  
Washington, D. C. 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Attached is our analysis of the recent Soviet Party Congress. I believe it answers the questions that you and the other members raised on this subject. [redacted]

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We have already responded by telephone to the questions on Lebanon, Angola, and the US naval exercise in the Black Sea. [redacted]

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As always, we stand ready to respond to any other questions you may have. [redacted]

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[redacted]  
John L. Helgerson  
Associate Deputy Director for  
Intelligence

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## The 27th CPSU Congress: Gorbachev's Unfinished Business

Key Judgments

Gorbachev's first congress was a fitting cap to a successful first year in office. He got most of what he wanted--an endorsement for his domestic policy agenda, a new Central Committee to carry out his policies, and a strengthened grip on the pinnacle of power, the top Kremlin leadership. [REDACTED]

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The congress saw the greatest turnover in the Politburo and Secretariat since Khrushchev's last congress in 1961, allowing Gorbachev to build further on his unprecedented successes in reshaping the top leadership. The placement of supporters at the candidate Politburo and junior secretariat rank--the stepping stone to full Politburo membership--positions him to further consolidate his power over the next year or two. Gorbachev also had considerable success at the Central Committee level, where the largest increment of new members since 1961 should give him a more compliant body. [REDACTED]

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Gorbachev received a strong endorsement of his domestic policy agenda which unfolded in his first year. The congress repudiated the Brezhnev era stagnation and inertia, displayed a new self-critical style of leadership, and set down more demanding standards for party and state bureaucrats. It blessed Gorbachev's modernization strategy, which relies heavily on heightened discipline in the short-term and increased investment in machine-building and new technology over the longer term, to reverse the stagnation of economic growth. [REDACTED]

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The congress probably opened the door to a wider discussion of economic reform. Gorbachev advanced the concept of "radical reform" as a legitimate topic for discussion, argued that prices, credits, and supply and demand should play a more important role in the economy, and quietly unveiled a change in agricultural policies which if implemented could shift some farm production onto cooperative or collective farm markets--where prices are largely set by supply and demand. One of Gorbachev's proteges justified such reliance on the "socialist market," by arguing that state ownership of industry would prevent such a step from evolving in the direction of capitalism. [REDACTED]

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The congress also gave a boost to Gorbachev's foreign policy approach, underscoring the degree to which it is closely tied to his domestic agenda. The focus on US-Soviet relations at the expense of traditional revolutionary and internationalist themes, and his low profile on regional issues, probably reflect his concern that an arms race with the United States could jeopardize his plans for economic modernization. While Soviet support for

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key Third World clients is apparently not about to change, the stress on arms control at the expense of rhetoric supporting revolutionary movements and internationalist themes apparently made some Third World leaders anxious. [redacted]

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Personnel changes at the congress reinforced the notion of the centrality of the US-Soviet relationship. Ambassador Dobrynin was brought back from Washington and assigned to the Secretariat and Gorbachev protege and propaganda specialist Aleksandr Yakovlev--who also has a strong background in US affairs--received a similar promotion, giving Gorbachev an unusually strong team of US specialists directly under his control. Gorbachev probably is building a strong core of advisors to help him pursue a more sophisticated strategy to influence American and West European public opinion against SDI and the US military buildup. [redacted]

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Despite these successes, there is good reason to believe that Gorbachev did not get all he wanted. Despite rumors that he wanted to oust several Brezhnev old guardists from the Politburo--particularly Kazakh boss Kunayev and Ukrainian First Secretary Shcherbitskiy--Gorbachev failed to accomplish this task or to advance some of his personal proteges in the Politburo. Pervasive resistance to change within the bureaucracy was also mentioned by Gorbachev and other congress speakers. A sufficiently large contingent of Brezhnevite appointees remain on the new Central Committees to act as a brake on the pace of change. [redacted]

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While endorsing Gorbachev's new more exacting standards for personnel, the congress did not produce the bolder measures that some Soviets had anticipated. Gorbachev did not launch a direct attack on Brezhnev, despite reports that he would give his own "secret speech"--a reference to Khrushchev's tumultuous denunciation of Stalin thirty years before. He went out of his way, in fact, to reassure the delegates that no purge was planned. The congress also failed to enact any method for systematically turning over leading officials, a provision which some Soviets had suggested Gorbachev wanted in order to avert a loss of political dynamism. Finally, second secretary Ligachev seemed to call a halt to media discussion of sensitive issues like bureaucratic privileges and greater democratization of the party. [redacted]

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On the economic front, Gorbachev also moved cautiously. While opening the door to discussion of further changes, he did not translate rhetoric into action. The five-year plan reflected his underlying caution and confidence that a focus on better performance of everyone from minister to worker would contribute to a turnaround in the economy without any major changes in the short-term. [redacted]

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The incompleteness of Gorbachev's victory suggests that he still faces a predicament of how to activate the system without throwing the bureaucracy into a panic. He has raised expectations by his earlier anti-Brezhnevian rhetoric and calls for change, but he still faces an ossified system and a resistant bureaucracy, and must somehow maneuver between the extremes of Brezhnev's immobilism and Khrushchev's penchant for sweeping reorganization, neither of which succeeded in affecting the desired modernization of the Soviet state and economy.

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The congress sends ambiguous signals about how Gorbachev intends to surmount this obstacle. Was his caution an indication that he had been checked by political resistance or did he purposefully choose a low profile strategy of pressing change in order to avoid providing his opponents with a clear rallying point? Developments over the next year should provide an opportunity to test these hypotheses and assess the degree of Gorbachev's commitment to change:

- o Will Gorbachev move more of the old guard out of the Politburo and Central Committee and promote proteges and allies more open to change, such as Moscow boss Yel'tsin or First Deputy Premier Murakhovskiy?
- o Will he maintain public pressure on the leadership shortcomings of the Brezhnev era, or authorize further public exposes on the privileges and failings of the bureaucratic elite?
- o Will he press ahead with the rumored restructuring of the party apparatus, moving it away from day-to-day economic issues toward a focus on strategic issues?
- o Will Gorbachev give substance to his call for "radical reform?"
- o Will Gorbachev succeed in carrying through changes in agricultural procurement policy despite likely resistance on ideological grounds?
- o Will Gorbachev's rhetoric on the increased role of prices, credit and supply and demand translate into a significant dilution of central control over the allocation of economic resources?

Gorbachev needs to make headway in the areas where the congress broke little new ground, such as cultural policy. Gorbachev must also consolidate his hold on foreign policy decisionmaking and should follow through on his rumored plans to create a strong national security making policy structure in the Secretariat, squarely under his control. It may be that Gorbachev takes a lay-term view, content to move deliberately in

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that he has a long tenure ahead of him in which to turn the country around. But he risks becoming mixed in political frictions at the top and bureaucratic lethargy below if he moves too slowly. [redacted]

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If Gorbachev can make significant headway against this ambitious list of undertakings, he may yet emerge as the strongest leader since Stalin and a genuine reformer of the Soviet system, rather than just another party boss interested in consolidating his own power. [redacted]

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### SOVIET LEADERSHIP RANKINGS

Depending upon the occasion there are slight differences in the protocol order in which the members of the Politburo appear. Since Ryzhkov's elevation to the premiership in September 1985, Gorbachev, Gromyko, Ryzhkov, and Ligachev have consistently stood ahead of other members of the Politburo. In keeping with the normal protocol status accorded to their jobs, on most occasions, President Gromyko and Premier Ryzhkov occupy the positions immediately after Gorbachev. At some party functions, such as the 27th Congress, the "second" secretary (Ligachev) has appeared in the number two spot, next to the party leader. At another ceremony during the Congress, however, Ligachev stood in his normal fourth-ranking position. [ ]

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Below the top level leadership rankings are less predictable. Nevertheless, there were several interesting developments in the rankings evident at the Congress:

--Aliyev has dropped in status, for the first time ranking below all other Moscow-based Politburo members.

--Over the past year Vorotnikov has been passed in the rankings by Chebrikov and Shevardnadze.

--After promotion to the Politburo, Zaykov immediately jumped ahead of Aliyev and the two regional leaders on the Politburo. [ ]

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The current protocol rankings of the Politburo are presented in the following chart. The rankings are based upon appearances at the Congress and other recent events. [ ]

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**SOVIET LEADERSHIP RANKINGS**

1. General Secretary Gorbachev
2. President Gromyko
3. Premier Ryzhkov
4. Secretary Ligachev
5. Party Control Committee Chairman Solomentsev
6. KGB Chief Chebrikov
7. Foreign Minister Shevardnadze
8. Russian Premier Vorotnikov
9. Secretary Zaykov
10. First Deputy Premier Aliyev
11. Ukrainian First Secretary Shcherbitskiy
12. Kazakh First Secretary Kunayev

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Ogarkov's Status

Former Chief of the General Staff and First Deputy Minister of Defense, Marshal Nikolay Ogarkov, remains in the shadows to which he was relegated by his transfer in September 1984 to the militarily important, but less politically sensitive, post of Chief of the Western Theater of Military Operations headquartered in Poland. At the time, [ ] he had run afoul of the political leadership, although the precise reasons for his demotion are still unclear. Since that time, his status has remained essentially unchanged. [ ]

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- o Ogarkov retained his seat on the party's elite body, the Central Committee, at the recent party congress and was seen on Soviet television during the proceedings, but has not yet made the political comeback that has been rumored to be on the way since last July. [ ]

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- o [ ] that Ogarkov would return had him as a replacement for Warsaw Pact Commander Kulikov and Defense Minister Sokolov, but both of the latter remain at their posts and were re-elected to the Central Committee. Sokolov also retained his Politburo candidate membership. [ ]

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Since his demotion he is apparently still highly regarded by many of the younger members of the officer corps as a first-class military strategist and thinker. Ogarkov's writings have periodically appeared, including an article in late 1984 and a short book reiterating some of his controversial views on defense policy in 1985. Gorbachev reportedly read his book last year and found it interesting. [ ]

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While Ogarkov may still make a political comeback, the rumors of his comeback have recently subsided. Although there is a general agreement that he is very talented, his reputation as an assertive and often overbearing advocate in pressing the military's case for resources and modernization may continue to cloud his prospects. [ ]

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